

Shipbuilding

"A VANISHED INDUSTRY"

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Some reminiscences of ship-building in Duxbury,
half a century ago-

Up! Up! in nobler toil than ours
No craftsmen bear a part:
We make of Nature's giant powers
The slaves of human art.
Lay rib to rib, and beam to beam,
And drive the treenails free;
Nor faithless joint nor yawning seam
Shall tempt the searching sea!

(Whittier)

At the time when the poet nearest to the heart of New England was singing his "songs of labor" the axes and mallets of many a busy shipyard in the little Massachusetts Town of Duxbury were beating time to his measures, as the men who wielded them acted out the inspiring words of "the shipbuilders".

It is only those who swung those ponderous tools, or who dwelt within the sound of their cheerful din, who can fully realize the contrast between that stirring era and the later years, that, since the shipbuilding industry died out, have slipped quietly, sluggishly along, like the tide in Duxbury's sedge choked channels.

We who know our Duxbury well in its present aspect, are perhaps fond of saying that we love the dear old town just as it is; here we may be "far from the madding crowd" and close to nature in sea, and shore, and forest; the very thought of bustling, driving toil would spoil the charm; but let some ancient mariner hold us "with his glittering eye" as he tells the tale of those palmy days when down those grassy slopes ship after ship was launched to help

"To wind the silken chain
Of commerce round the world-"

and now can we "choose but hear"?-

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Of the value of the work done in the Duxbury shipyards, sufficient testimony has already been recorded; the late Hon. E. S. Tobey once said:- "To speak of the character of the numerous first class ships which have been built here, would be to recall the names of the best mechanics and skilled artisans of the whole country; to speak of the men who commanded those ships, would be to make honorable mention of intelligent and eminent navigators, who with the flag of the Republic at the mast-head, guided those ships into nearly every commercial port of the habitual globe." It is one, who can claim a modest place among these shipmasters, and whose memory extends back to about 1850 or 1832, who has taken pleasure in recalling and describing the scenes of his boyhood and early manhood among the busy shipyards of his native town; these personal reminiscences are here prefaced by brief historical notes, gathered mainly from Winsor's History of Duxbury, published in 1649, and Goodwin's, the Pilgrim Republic, published in 1868--

Duxbury as a settlement, is almost as old as its neighbor Plymouth, for we learn that some of the earliest settlers of Plymouth, soon after "the distribution of cattle" in 1627, found it necessary to extend their pasturage far beyond the original limits, and in 1628 had already sought room on the north side of the harbor, within the borders of what is now Duxbury.

For the convenience of caring for the pastured animals, the owners formed the habit of remaining here through the summer months, returning for the winter to their Plymouth homes; that their connection with the church might not be broken, it inevitably followed, however, that more substantial dwellings

were built upon the northern shore, and in 1637 the little hamlet had so far grown, with such proprietors as Standish, Brewster, Winslow, Alden, Howland, Soule and Sampson, as to petition the General Court of Plymouth for incorporation as a new township, to be named by Myles Standish, Duxbury.

Reluctantly, no doubt, the conservatives, who dreaded this breaking sunder of church ties, granted the petition, and so the separate existence of the town began. Its boundaries were not fixed until later, at that time it included much that is now a part of neighboring towns.

Winslow had a farm at Greenharbor, and it is recorded by Goodwin that, "it was thought that no one would want to live so far from Plymouth permanently". We also learn that Duxbury from the first attracted a fine class of residents through the superior fertility of its soil to that of Plymouth: this applied especially to the part first settled, known as "the Nook".

By degrees the needs of the people gave rise to new branches of industry, but we find no record of what was long the leading business of the town, prior to the year 1720, about which time Thomas Prince is said to have established the first yard within its limits for the building of vessels, on the westerly shore of the "Nook", at the foot of "Captain's Hill". the first vessel built there was a sloop, constructed mostly of wild cherry.

The second yard was owned by Israel Sylvester, or Bluefish River; the third by Benjamin Freeman at Harden Hill a short distance north from the Nook, and near the extreme southeastern part of the town: Perez Drew owned the fourth yard, location not known.

Samuel Winsor, the first of the name in Duxbury, and Samuel Drew together carried on the fifth yard, on the shore of the Mook westward of Captain's Hill, Samuel Winsor had previously, about 1745-50, built several small vessels on Clark's Island; the sixth yard was established by Isaac Drew at the west side of the Mook. John Oldham had a yard at Duck Hill, in the northern part of the town, not far from Marshfield line, where now it is mostly salt meadow, and the creeks are nearly filled with coarse sedge.

* (The dwelling house that stood here was burnt down and the store-house or workshop was moved to the northwest part of the town and for many years used as a "Country Store" commonly known as "Mooks Store", and this also was burnt down a few years ago.) There was still another shipyard carried on by Capt. Samuel Delano below the mouth of Bluefish River, on the west side. These yards had nearly all been abandoned before 1830, and were succeeded by the following, of which the writer has personal recollection. At the extreme southwest part of the town, between Captain's Hill and the mouth of Jones River in Kingston, and not far from the residence of Harrison Loring, Mr. James Soule had a Shipyard, where he built what were then considered good sized vessels, but which would now be called small; he gave up the business before 1840, I think - The yard of Benjamin Prior, on the southeast part of the town shore, near the Mook, was occupied by Ezra Weston, and there Samuel Hall built for him several ships; because of the large size of the vessels built there, it was familiarly known as the "Navy Yard".

The ship "Mattakeset", built about 1833, of 480 tons, whose first commander was Capt. Briggs Thomas, was the largest merchant

vessel that had then been built in New England. Mr. Weston about 1834 established his yard on the southerly side of Blue-Rish River, where Samuel Hall, and after him Samuel Cushing, built for him a large number of vessels; I recall the names of ships "St. Lawrence", "Admittance", "Vandalia", "Eliza Warwick", "Oneco", (in which I made my first voyage, 1839), "Hope", I was a boy on board of the "Hope" when she was launched in 1841, and nine years later took command of her; she was then, (1850) the largest merchant ship in New England, and took the largest cargo of Cotton (3100 bales) that had ever been taken from New Orleans,

(a picture of this vessel was exhibited at the Worlds Fair, Chicago 1893 as a contrast between the "Old Style" and the "New")

The ship "Manteo", built about 1843, was the last vessel built for the westons, (E. Weston & Sons, Gershom B. & Alden B. Weston at that time, Ezra Weston Senior, having died the previous year).

There was also a large fleet of brigs and schooners, of which I recall brigs "Neptune", "Margaret", "Smyrna", "Ceres", "Levant", "Oriole", "Messenger", "Lion", and schooners "Dray", "Seadrift", "Virginia", "Triton".

Luther Turner had his yard adjoining Mr. Weston's on the east where he built small vessels. Next to Mr. Weston's on the west was Mr. Levi Sampson's yard, he built vessels for himself and for Boston parties. One ship that was being built about 1835 for Mr. Thomas Lamb of Boston, caught fire whilst on the stocks, and was very near being destroyed, while the "Admittance" in Mr. Weston's yard was in great danger.

* (Previous to 1838 a yard was situated where the Odd

Fellow's Hall now stands which was operated by Mr. Seth Sprague familiarly known as "Squire Sprague". The vessels built there were of small size and were launched across the highway into the dock alongside the wharf next to S. W. Freeman & Co's store.) About 1837 or 1838 Samuel Hall built for Mr. Lamb the ship "Narragansett" and for Phineas Sprague & Co the ship "Constantine", in a yard established by him on the east shore of the village, just north of the "Navy Yard" before mentioned; in 1840 he removed to East Boston, where he was one of the pioneers of the business and remained for many years a noted shipbuilder-- A short distance north of Mr. Hall's yard was that of Nathaniel and Joshua Cushing, where they built vessels for various parties; the only name that I recall is that of the barque "Maid of Orleans".--

The building of a drawbridge and dam across Bluefish River in 1803, formed a millpond above, on which, at the northwest end, was the yard of Samuel A. Frazer, (originally that of Israel Sylvester) where he built a large number of vessels for himself and various other parties; the peculiar name of one of them was "Hitty Tom" after an old Indian squaw who formerly lived in the neighbourhood; he also built the first ship "Hoogly" for Daniel C. Bacon of Boston.

Deacon George Loring's yard was on the southeast part of the pond near the bridge: he built mostly for Charles Binney of Boston and his son C.J.F. Binney; I recall only the names of brig "Cynosure", ship "Grafton" and barque "Binney": I remember that the "Grafton" being very narrow and crank, capsized two or three times while they were getting her out of the river. The vessels launched from this yard, and Mr. Sampson's

just below the bridge went plump into the opposite meadow as soon as they were off the ways. Mr. Silvanus Drew's yard was on the north side of Bluefish River; his sons, Capt. Reuben and Mr. Charles Drew succeeded him after his death, about 1830 and they were followed by Silvanus Drew, son of Charles and he by William Paulding, who built many vessels in the yard, mostly barques and brigs for the Philadelphia and Baltimore lines, and the Mediterranean trade.

* (The last three vessels built by Mr. Paulding were "The Minnette" for Mr. Prior, the "Olive G. Tower" and the "Mary Amanda" on his own account, the latter was named after his granddaughter, the eldest daughter of Mr. George Bates of Cove Street, he ceased operations in 1867--). The vessels that I remember as being built there by the Drews were ships "Hemlock", "Alcebaran", "Hercules", "Minerva", "Chilo", "Susan Drew", "George Hallett", "Kedron", "Isaiah Crowell",; barques "Eunomus", "Mary Chilton", "Hersilia", "Kensington"; besides several brigs and smaller vessels.

M. Porter Keen, who had previously worked for Mr. Paulding, from 1868 to 1875, occupied the yard formerly used by Mr. Levi Sampson, below the bridge on Bluefish River; here he built the last fullrigged ship built in Duxbury, the "Samuel G. Reed" launched in 1869, and commanded by Capt. Henry Otis Winsor; this vessel is now the barque "Fantee"; another vessel built there was the barkentine "Benjamin Dickerman" * (other vessels built by Mr. Keen were, the "Mary D. Leach" a whaler, a small fishing schooner the "I tell ye" built for William Sears of the Hook, a small sloop and the last vessel built there was one of the largest, if not the largest ever built in Duxbury, she was dubbed

by one of the local wits "Keen's Elephant" she was launched in an unfinished condition, when she left the ways she went into the marsh just back of Mr. Thomas Hathaway's present shop, fully forty feet and there stuck fast, the indentation she made in the marsh with her bows is plainly visible today, she was hauled out the next tide out lay across the river close up to the bridge until a lighter came from Boston with a cargo of casks which were lashed to a chain running around under her bilge & in that condition she was floated out to the bend of the river off Paulding's Wharf and made fast by a hawser to one of the trees on King Caesar's Road, Mr. Alden B. Weston came down there and found her so fastened and feeling aggrieved at the injury done to the bark of his tree, cast her off and she went ashore on the opposite point, some hot words and high feeling was occasioned by this incident, Mr. Keene claiming that a vessel in distress had a right to use any means to insure her safety, but Mr. Weston proved the seeming paradox that she was not yet a vessel in distress, and that having been built up the river, Mr. Keen must get her out, without injury to or trespass upon other people's property. She was pulled off, and towed out of the harbor by a steam tug: The injury to the bark of the tree is still visible, so that whatever became of her, she may be said to have made her marks in the world. Mr. Keen removed to Weymouth and built vessels there.

About 1870 or 1871 John Merritt, Amos Merritt and Warren Standish, reopened Mr. Paulding's yard and built a schooner she was the last vessel built there, they then went over on the village shore to about the location formerly occupied by Samuel Hall where they built the schooners "Annie S. Conant" and "Addie R. Warner", this vessel was built for the fruit trade for Philadelphia parties, she was rigged and fitted completely ready for sea upon the stocks.

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but was soon afterwards lost at sea, she was the last vessel built in that yard; The Merritt brothers removed to a new location, just to the south on the land of Calvin (popularly called "Cuff") Josselyn, and there they built the last vessel ever built in Duxbury, the barque "Thomas A. Goddard", in 1878 or 1879-)

This rapid enumeration will give some idea of the general distribution of the shipyards in which centered the energy and enterprise that made Duxbury for so many years the leading town of Plymouth County.

* (To give an idea of the activity of the business at this time, I will repeat a statement made to me by Mr. Jacob Sprague who for many years drove the stagecoach from Duxbury to Boston, he took possession of the stage route and property on the 14th of May 1838, on the previous Thursday the 10th of May he drove over from Plymouth in a chaise to negotiate the purchase of the property and between the spot where Mrs. Melbourne McDowell's ("Fanny Davenport") house now stands, which was the site of "The Navy Yard" before mentioned, and Mr. Howard's house which was then the residence of Samuel A. Frazar, he counted eighteen vessels upon the stocks.)

It will be observed that while most of the older yards were established in the neighborhood of the "Hook", or that part of the town nearest Plymouth, the later ones were clustered quite closely together on the shores of the Mill-pond and Bluefish River. [From the little schoolhouse on Powder Point we young folks could hear the clatter and clangor of six shipyards all in full blast within less than a quarter of a mile; the location of this schoolhouse and of other buildings near by, on piles over

marshy land where at every high tide the salt water flowed, was perhaps owing to a peculiarity of Duxbury public roads. ~~At least~~ in the eastern part, where they were often run as near as possible to the water, and so near in many places as to be overflowed by a tide more than ordinarily high. The salt water frequently flooded the road in front of the house where I was born, and came up into the front yard, therefore it is not strange that I took to the water like a young duck.

The nearest shipyard to the schoolhouse was the Drew's, which was a double yard, where often two vessels were building at once; many a wheelbarrow load of chips have I brought from that yard; many a time, at 11 o'clock in the forenoon, and at 4 in the afternoon, have I heard the call of "Grog O", whereupon all of the carpenters quit work and adjourned to the workhouse and "smiled"; many a time have I watched the launching of the vessels built there. The country road ran between the yard and the water (of course!) so that at launching time the ways had to be laid across the highway and all teams were obliged to go up through the yard around the vessels on the stocks. [Of course school always adjourned for such an important event, which took place generally about 11 A.M. (high water, spring tides, full and change of the moon).] The most interesting part of the programme to us small boys was what we called "cashing the bottle"; a man standing on the bowsprit holding by a short lanyard a bottle of wine or something of the sort, broke it over the bows just as the vessel took the water, at the same instant calling out "Here's success to the good ship - "Oneco"! - for instance.

I can remember when it was the height of my ambition to be big enough to "cash the bottle", but I never reached that exalted position.

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The next highest mark at which I aimed was to be allowed to go cock of the sloop "Reform", Mr. Weston's Boston packet, but even to that honor I did not attain; so that I was "Kep' down" in my very youth, thus were my ambitions crushed, while my youthful energies were directed to other channels. (The period of schooling was brief in those days for the sons of hardworking parents, and at a very early age I was released from the absorbing labor of fishing for minnows with a bent pin through the cracks of the school-house floor, and set at the far more irksome task of "turning the wheel" in the ropewalk.)

This particular ropewalk was part of a system of industries carried on by the Westons, without a somewhat extended notice of which no account of Duxbury shipbuilding could be regarded as adequate. Ezra Weston, the second of the name, and inheriting from his father the popular title of "King Caesar", was for the years 1820 to 1842 probably the most widely known citizen of Duxbury, and was considered to be the largest shipowner in the United States; Daniel Webster so rated him in his great speech at Saratoga during the Harrison campaign of 1840. His ships were then to be seen in all parts of the world; he not only built his own vessels, but he controlled nearly all the branches of business connected with shipbuilding and the ownership of vessels: he had his own ropewalk, sparyard, blacksmith shop, and sailort; brought his timber and lumber from Haverhill and Bangor in his own schooners, or from Bridgewater and Middleborough with his own ox or horse teams, and his supplies from Boston in his own packet; his salt came from Cadiz, St. Uves, and Turks Island in his own brigs, he sent his schooners to the Grand Banks for fish in the summer time, and "out south" in the

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winter for corn. He owned a large tract of land on Powder Point, and here, on the south side, where Bluefish River widens into the bay, with the outlook towards Captain's Hill and Plymouth, stood his dwelling house; here still remains "Westons wharf", where his new vessels fitted out, and where his packets loaded and unloaded, but spar-yard and sail-loft, blacksmith shop and ropewalk, have all disappeared. The old Weston homestead was destroyed by fire a few years since, and the more modern mansion built by him 1808 - 9, is now occupied by Mr. F.B. Knapp.

Several miles inland, towards Pembroke, Mr. Weston owned an extensive farm, where his farmer raised a large part of the vegetables used on board his vessels, and of the beef and pork needed for sea-voyages.

There is an old conundrum: "Why is a ship always called 'she'?" The correct answer to which is supposed to be: "Because it needs so much rigging." Not to dwell upon any "odorous comparisons", it is undeniable that the rigging forms a very important attribute to a vessel that is

"To feel the stress and the strain
of the wind and the roaring main".

The first Ezra Weston, although quite an extensive vessel owner and with various branches of business on his hands, managed to have a sort of superintendence of his ropewalk until about 1819 or 1820, when he engaged my father, Ephraim Bradford, to come over from Plymouth (where he was foreman in the ropewalk of Salisbury Jackson,) and he remained in charge of the concern until they gave up business about 1840 or '50, and the ropewalk was torn down about the latter year.

In those days there was no water or steam power used in laying up rigging, but all was done by horse power at one end,

and man power at the other; the spinning of the threads was done by hand, the men, usually six at one time, each with a bunch of hemp fastened about his waist, all moved with slow step, backward:-

"In that building long and low,
With its windows all a-row,
Like the port-holes of a bulk,
Human spiders spin, and spin,
Backward, down their threads so thin,
Dropping, each, a hempen bulk."

It required a good deal of practice for a man to spin an even thread, with no weak spots or bunches in it. It was monotonous work, the spinning, and the boy turning the wheel that twisted the threads had a dull time of it: after the men had passed out of hearing, he heard nothing but the rattle of his wheel for twenty minutes.

"At the end an open door,
Squares of sunshine on the floor
Light the long and dusty lane;
And the whirling of a wheel
Dull and crowsy, makes me feel
All its spokes are in my brain."

When one length had been spun the boy must take the separate threads off the wheel, splice two together, and hook them to a big post amidships of the walk, and then walk down the entire length (about 300 yards) taking in a crooked stick the threads that had just been spun, from the small hooks overhead where the spinners had put them, and laying them all together over into large hooks in the middle, just clear of a man's head. Then the boy must carry a fresh supply of hemp to his wheel for the men to use for the next thread. From "Sun to Sun" this dull work went on, and that in the longest summer days meant from 4:30 A.M. to about 7:15 P.M. with half an hour allowed for breakfast and one hour for dinner.

How many boys, now-a-days, know what work like that is?

* (Mr. Joshua Swift, our present Town Treasurer, was a companion ropewalk boy with Capt. Bradford in this same ropewalk)

When we were "laying up" rigging there was more excitement, and though the work was harder I liked it better. Down in the cellar of the ropewalk I rode astride of "old Dick", who harnessed to a long bar, connected by a central upright "drum" with the heavy machinery above, walked round and round in a circle, thus supplying the needed power. A fine old horse, Old Dick well deserved the substantial monument which still marks his grave in the sunny pasture near the scene of his labors, and bears this inscription:-

"All are out parts of one stupendous Whole,
Whose body nature is, and God the soul."
"Here lies buried honest Dick, who faithfully served three generations. This noble horse was born upon Powder Point A.D. 1817. Here lived and here died 1846".

Always welcome were the occasional calls upon the "ropewalk gang" whenever extra help was needed elsewhere; sometimes it was in unloading a cargo of salt, much harder work but different. On one of these occasions the monotony of the ropewalk boy's existence was still further relieved when "old Juba", the horse who was doing the hoisting, stepped backward and planted each of his hind feet upon each bare foot of the small boy on the ground behind him. As his father picked him up to carry him home, old Capt. Benjamin Smith, who happened to be near by, recommended the genuine sailor's remedy of "tobacco leaves soaked in rum"!- Sometimes we had to help the farmers get in the hay, and all hands were needed to work the new vessels after launching, from the shipyard down the narrow, shallow river, an undertaking which sometimes required three or four days and nights, I think we were nearly a week getting the "Hope" down, but I was no rope-

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walk boy then: I had been to sea two years, and was pretty salt!-

My little grandson asked his mother recently:- "Dian't Grandpa run away to go to sea?" "Oh no!", he didn't, most boys did". It is easy to imagine how he had picked up this idea from some of the stories he had been reading, but in Luxbury, in my day, the most natural step for a boy to take was from the ropewalk or the wharf to the deck - or the masthead - of a vessel, and in this way I graduated into the more exciting and absorbing career at the early age of 15. As I look back now to those early days at home, I am impressed by the fact, usually evident in quiet country places, that these hardworking ship-builders and mechanics, in their community of labor and interests, were almost like one large family; the men who worked side by side in the yards lived in the same neighborhood, met again at "the store" after tea, and with their families walked together across the pastures to the church on Sundays; their children sat side by side on the benches of the district school, and, later, bound the families yet more closely together by marriage.

There were the usual number of eccentric characters. I can seem to see "Old Warren" now, bending over his wheelbarrow; one of those unfortunates, born, as the Scotch say, "not all there", he was everybody's out: how proud he was one day of the fact that the Rev. Mr. Kent had spoken to him! And what did Mr. Kent say to him? "Get out of the way with your old wheelbarrow".

He called Mr. Weston a "darned old rip-er-crip" (hypocrite) to his face once, because the old gentleman wouldn't let him take chips from the sparyard.

It was "Aunt Keeney" Brewster who announced that the initials connected with the weather-vane surmounting the tall flag stagg on the Point stood for "Ezra Weston's New Ship".

It is worthy of note that during this period of industrial activity, Duxbury furnished not only ships, but men to sail them. Nearly every Duxbury-built vessel was officered by men who had been born within the sound of axe and mallet, had served an apprenticeship at sea from boyhood, and knew a ship "from Keelson to truck".

Mr. Weston's Captains were mostly from Duxbury or the adjoining town of Marshfield, of those in command of his ships when I began my sea-life, I know of only two now living: Capt. Alfred Kendrick of Orleans, 93 years old, and Capt. Alexander Wadsworth of Duxbury, aged 85 years. Within two years was living Capt. Seth Sprague of Marshfield, who died at the age of 93, having been retired from the sea 52 years! These Captains belong to a "former generation"; of a later generation only two remain, that I know of, Capt. Klisha Sprague and myself; these out of thirty-three that I have known and talked with.

(Here follows a list of names of Duxbury Captains or the commanders of Duxbury ships known to the writer, 109 in all, of whom only 9 are believed to be living now, 1894)

Amasa Delano
Samuel Delano
Gamaliel Bradford
Keuben Drew
William Delano
Joshua Brewster
Gershom Bradford
Jedediah Southworth
Nathaniel Soule
Geo. P. Richardson
Henry Chandler
John Southworth
Joseph Drew
Phineas Sprague

Richard Soule
Nathan Soule
Perez Sampson
Henry P. Packard
Zenas Winsor
George Peterson
John Frazar
Daniel Brewster
Job Brewster
Thomas Soule
Otis Baker
Alfred Kendrick
Eden Wadsworth
Charles Soule

Benjamin Smith
Jacob Smith
Nathaniel Weston
Amherst A. Frazar
William Weston
Nath'l Simmons
James Chandler
Alfred Sampson
Ichabod Simmons
Seth Sprague
Daniel Winsor
Gershom Winsor
Simon Soule
Ezra Winsor

Briggs Thomas	Daniel Bradford	Stephen C. Sprague
Nathl Thomas	Bailey Loring	Joseph Nickerson
Isaac Winsor	Albert Winsor	Gains Sampson
Benj. Winsor	Church Weston	Allen Dawes
Winthrop S. Babbidge	Lewis Peterson	Otis Baker, Jr.
Martin Waterman	Thomas Winsor	Josephus Dawes
Zedac Bradford	Alex ^r Winsor	Gershom B. Weston, Jr.
Joshua Drew	Elisha Cushman	Alex ^r Sampson
Henry K. Loring	Robert Welch	James H. Dawes
Zara Higgins	Simeon Sampson	Elisha Sprague
Joseph Cummings	David Cushman	Henry Nickerson
Benj. Taylor	George Prior	Jonathan Smith, Jr.
George Winsor	Henry Prior	Daniel Baker
Rosea Winsor	Wm. B. Drew	Edward Baker
Daniel Glass	George Drew	William Peterson
Freeman Soule	Edward Drew	John Bradford
Erastus Sampson	Alfred Drew	John Weston
Alexander Wedgworth	Benj. Freeman	Wm Weston, 2nd.
Eben Howe	Zenas Winsor, Jr.	Henry Otis Winsor
Kimball Harlow	Sidney Smith	Geo. F. Nickerson
William Thomas	Chas. Freak. Winsor	Walter Josselyn
Alvin Baker	Elisha Sampson	Wm. H. Simmons

The lapse of years is marked no more significantly by these lessening numbers than by the decrease in Duxbury of her chief industry. Various were the causes which led to this decline: the shoal water of the harbor, running out dry at low tide, which became a more serious consideration with the steadily increasing size of vessels; the growing scarcity of shiptimber in the vicinity; the growth of the business in East Boston, which gradually supplanted not only Duxbury but Medford; these and perhaps others combined, led to the abandonment of the yards by the proprietors.

quite a little colony of the skilled workmen removed to East Boston which still carries many Duxbury names on its roll of citizens.

A stranger visiting the sites of those busy shipyards would find absolutely nothing to indicate that any vessel was ever built there; all is stillness, and we who remember the town in its prosperous days, when Duxbury ships were known the world over

have lived to see the time when a Duxbury skipper must go to the eastward of Cape Ann to have a 20 ton fishing schooner built:-

The contrast is well expressed in the words of the late Hon. George B. Loring, whose love of the town never grew cold:-

"To my youthful ear the sound of a hundred hammers in the early morning hours, when a day's labor began at sunrise and ended with the summer's sunset, was a music which I can never forget, and which we shall probably never hear again. A Duxbury ship was to me a badge of beauty, and whatever achievements may be made in naval architecture, the names of Sampson and Weston, and Brew, and Frazer, and Loring, and Winsor, will outshine, in my mind, all the McKays and Carriers, and Halls that ever launched a ship on the Merrimac or the Mystic, or on the shores of Noddles' Island, and will share with John Roach the fame of those American ship-builders whose vessels defied the storms of ocean and resisted the destructive tooth of time. xxxxxxxxxxxx

but the music of those hammers is still; the old shipyards in which I used to play, not a chip, or timber, or spar, or plank there, but a luxuriant greensward where grass is growing for cattle, and herb for the service of man."

There have been three notable occasions of recent years recalling quiet Duxbury to the attention of the outside world; these were, the landing there of the French Atlantic Cable in 1869; the laying of the corner-stone of the Standish Monument in 1872; and the celebration, in, 1887, of the Two hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the incorporation of the Town - In honor of these events her scattered children hastened home as to a Thanksgiving feast, held glad reunion, and spoke warm words of loving appreciation.

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And year by year the number grows of those who, knowing little or nothing of her years of toil, love her, as we said in the beginning, just as they find her now, and ask for no more charming place in which to spend a long summer's holiday.

But best of all, in true Duxbury homes the spirit of thrift and industry still lives; the sturdy qualities inherent in the Pilgrim stock have not become extinct, and thoughtful, earnest lives are working out the problems of today, and leavening with simple manly virtues the whole community.

JOHN BRADFORD

These reminiscences were written by Capt. Bradford almost entirely in 1891, but were arranged in practically their present form by his daughter in April, 1893, during which month Capt. Bradford furnished the last of his memoranda. On the first day of May, 1893, while on a visit to Duxbury, death came to him very suddenly, and he fell unconscious by the roadside where in boyhood his feet must often have trod on the way to and from church.

ELLEN BRADFORD STEBBINS

The portions marked * in brackets, were added by Geo. A. Green, partly from personal knowledge and partly from the testimony of old residents from their personal knowledge, previous to his reading the paper before the Duxbury Historical and Antiquarian Society in August 1894, for which purpose the "reminiscences" were kindly lent by Mrs. E. B. Stebbins.

GEO. A. GREEN

Treasurer and Secretary